Welcome to the Louisiana State Employees Retirement System Online Education Program



Membership in LASERS includes a plan of investment today that will provide an income later for your retirement years. Carefully review this presentation of LASERS retirement benefit plan. Information on the Deferred Retirement Option Plan, or DROP, and the Initial Benefit Option, or IBO, is also included in this presentation.

Regardless of your years of service, it is important to be aware of your retirement benefits. If this review does not answer all of your questions about LASERS and you need additional information, please contact us at the numbers listed at the end of this presentation. We ask that you visit LASERS Web Site (www.lasersonline.org) for up-to-date information on many retirement subjects. LASERS also publishes a quarterly newsletter, the "LASERS BEAM," which is mailed directly to your home.

Please use the buttons to the bottom and to the left of the screen to navigate through the program.



TOPIC MENU





If you wish to proceed to a particular topic of this presentation, please select the topic above and click the link. You will automatically be taken to the requested information.

OVERVIEW



LASERS was established by act of the Louisiana Legislature in 1946. The first members joined the System in 1947.

LASERS is a qualified defined benefit pension retirement plan under section 401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code. Employees contribute to LASERS at a percentage of their actual earnings. These contributions are tax sheltered until retirement.

Membership is mandatory for most state employees who are employed in eligible positions.

LASERS is governed by a Board of Trustees of 12 members (nine elected by members, actives and retirees, and three elected ex-officios). The Board meetings are open to the public and are usually held the fourth Friday of each month at LASERS.

LASERS funding for retirement pensions come from three sources:

Employee contributions
Employer contributions
Earnings from LASERS investments

Lasers Recommendations



LASERS recommends that you:

Plan now for the future. It is estimated that people spend 25% of their lifetime in retirement.

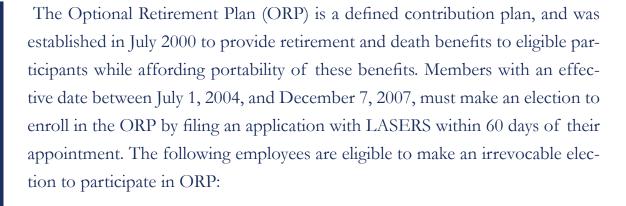
Understand your retirement plan. You must meet basic eligibility requirements of years of service, or age, or a combination of both to retire from state service. Your benefit is based on your highest average salary, and it is payable for your lifetime.

Understand the Optional Retirement Plan (ORP).

Investigate the possibility of repaying prior refunds or purchase creditable service well in advance of your anticipated date of retirement.



OPTIONAL RETIREMENT PLAN (ORP)



- a. 1) Any unclassified state employee who is appointed by a statewide-elected official whose appointment is subject to confirmation by the Louisiana Senate.
- 2) Any unclassified employee who is a member of the immediate staff of any such employee described in Item a (1) of this section.
 - 3) The CEO of the Office of State Group Benefits Program.
- 4) Members of the Executive Career Service defined by the Civil Service Commission.
- b. An ORP member who becomes employed by a LASERS reporting agency in a position not listed in Part (a) of this section must continue participation in ORP. The ORP election is irrevocable.



YEARS OF SERVICE

How can I find out how many years of service I have?

An annual statement is issued each year stating your creditable service. Please check your statement carefully. You may request a review of your file should you have questions about the amounts reflected on your statement.



INCREASING YEARS OF SERVICE



Service can be purchased for a number of past employment situations and may involve an actuarial calculation. Examples of purchasable service include:

Purchase of in-state service Purchase of military service Purchase of certain service for legislators

Purchase of leave without pay

How do I purchase "Air Time?" (LSA R.S. 11:429(B))

If you have at least **five years** of service credit, you are eligible to purchase up to five years of credit. The service can be purchased at one time or in one-year increments.

Any credit purchased shall be used for the **calculation of benefit only and shall not be used for purposes of attaining eligibility for retirement.** You pay the system an amount, which on an actuarial basis totally offsets the increased liability of the system, resulting from the service credit being purchased.



INCREASING YEARS OF SERVICE

Refund of Employee Contributions

If you leave state service prior to retirement, you may apply for a refund of your accumulated contributions made to LASERS. However, you must be out of state service for at least 30 days before the refund can be processed. Only member contributions are refundable. No employer contributions or interest is due.

Emergency Refund Request

Emergency refunds are available on a one-time basis only. Once a member has taken advantage of this single opportunity and has received a refund, that member shall no longer be eligible for an emergency refund.



INCREASING YEARS OF SERVICE

Service Credit in More Than One Retirement System

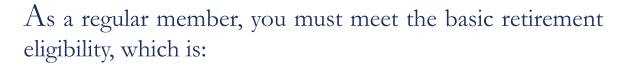
If you have service credit in more than one state, parochial, or municipal retirement system in Louisiana, you may either apply for a reciprocal agreement or a transfer of service credit.

A reciprocal agreement is the recognition of your service credit in one Louisiana retirement system by another Louisiana retirement system.

An actuarial transfer of service is the transfer from one Louisiana retirement system to another of your service credit, accumulated employee and employer contributions and interest.



WHEN CAN I RETIRE?



30 years of service at any age;

25 years of service at age 55; or

10 years of service at age 60.

Any member hired on or after **July 1, 2006** shall be eligible for retirement if he has:

Ten years of service credit at age 60 or thereafter

LASERS has an option offered at 20 years of service at any age or 10 years at age 50 (through 12/31/2008) with an actuarially reduced benefit.

Unused sick and annual leave cannot be used to establish eligibility for retirement.



OPTIONS UPON DATE OF ELIGIBILITY



- 1. Regular Retirement
- 2. Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP)
- 3. Regular Retirement with Initial Benefit Option (IBO)

Be sure to meet with a LASERS benefit analyst before making a selection.



CALCULATION OF RETIREMENT BENEFIT



LASERS uses a formula to calculate the basic maximum benefit for regular and disability retirement, which is:

- 2.5% retirement accrual rate for most employee groups
- x years of service credit
- x final average compensation (FAC)
- = maximum benefit

If you were hired by the state before July 1, 1986, and did not refund, an additional \$25 per month may be added to the above calculation. However, if you did refund and paid the refund back prior to 07/01/86, you can add the additional \$25 per month to the above calculation.



CALCULATION OF SERVICE CREDIT

How is service credit calculated?

Calculation of service credit after January 1, 1973, is based on the ratio of actual compensation earned during the calendar year to potential full-time base pay for the entire year. A full-time member should receive a tenth of a year of service credit for each day reached on the chart below if there is no break in service.

January 2	2 =	.10	July 15	=	.60
February		.20	August 15	=	.70
April 1	=	.30	September 30	=	.80
May 1	=	.40	October 30	=	.90
June 1	=	.50	December 1	=	1.00

Service credit before January 1, 1973, is based on the total service carried out within each fiscal year. A full-time member should receive a quarter of a year of service credit for the number of days worked on the chart below.

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15-89 days = 0.25 year

90-179 = 0.50 year

180-269 = 0.75 year

270 or more= 1.00 year
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Part-time service credit is now defined as an employee receiving less than 80% of a year's retirement credit within a calendar year. Part-time service credit is calculated on a case-by-case basis.



FINAL AVERAGE COMPENSATION

How is Final Average Compensation calculated?

Final Average Compensation (FAC) is defined as the average earned compensation received during 36 highest months of successive employment, or the highest joined months of employment if service was interrupted.

Members employed on or after **July 1, 2006**, will have their average compensation based on the 60 highest months of successive employment or for the 60 highest joined months of successive employment where interuption of service occured.



20-YEAR RETIREMENT CALCULATION



LASERS provides a retirement option of 20 years at any age. However, you will be ineligible for the IBO and the DROP. The retirement benefit is actuarially reduced based on the number of months you are away from regular retirement and your age. The closer you are to regular eligibility, the less your reduction.

The reduced retirement example below is based on someone retiring immediately after termination of employment. Filing an application after termination of state service may cause the reduction to be greater.

EXAMPLE:

An employee retires with 20 years of service at age 55; the employee's average compensation is \$20,000.

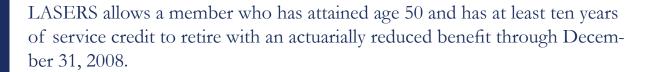
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2.5% x 20 years x $20,000
$10,000 yearly maximum benefit, or divide by 12 = $833.33 monthly
maximum benefit
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In this example, the regular eligibility would have been age 60 with 25 years. The reduction is based on 60 months from regular retirement (5 years x 12 months = 60 months). The actuarial reduction factor for 60 months is .60716.

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$833.33 = maximum monthly benefit
x .60716 = actuarial reduction factor
$505.96 = reduced maximum benefit for retiring 60 months early
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Early Retirement: 10 Years at age 50



A member retiring during this time period may not return to state service for two years. In the event the retiree attempts to return to work prior to the twoyear period, their membership application will be returned to the agency with a notice that they are not eligible for state employment.

Members who retire early cannot participate in the Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) or choose the Initial Benefit Option (IBO).



INITIAL BENEFIT OPTION (IBO)



The IBO became available to LASERS new retirees in 1996. This option is selected at retirement and allows the member to receive up to 36 months of the maximum benefit in a lump sum. However, this option eliminates the monthly benefit Option 1 as a retirement choice and reduces future monthly benefits. This option is not available to DROP participants, disability retirees, or 20-year retirees.

You can be paid an IBO in 3 different ways:

Receive a lump sum benefit which is subject to 20% IRS withholding. If you are under age 59 1/2, the initial benefit lump sum may be subject to an additional 10% IRS withholding tax at the time of withdrawal, or

Place the lump sum in an individual account in the Self-Directed Plan and withdraw upon request. The account earns interest, if payable (subject to applicable tax withholding upon withdrawal), or

Request a direct rollover to a qualified plan such as a traditional IRA or deferred compensation account (subject to applicable tax withholdings upon withdrawal).

For example, if an employee retires with a maximum benefit of \$1,000 per month, the employee can receive a lump sum IBO between \$1,000 to \$36,000 (up to 36 months of the maximum benefit). Then the monthly benefit will be actuarially reduced based on the amount of the lump sum chosen. A person age 60 would have a Maximum reduction of around \$310.00 if a \$36,000 IBO is chosen.



DEFERRED RETIREMENT OPTION PLAN



The Louisiana legislature authorized the DROP option in 1990 and eligibility for DROP participation was changed in the 1995 Legislative Session. The new law applies to all members who were first eligible for regular retirement on or after January 1, 1996.

Legislation passed during the 2003 Legislative Session provides for self-directed investment of funds in the DROP/IBO plan effective January 1, 2004.

DROP is an optional method of retiring, not an additional retirement benefit.

You defer your retirement benefit while working and earning a salary.

Your retirement benefit is deposited monthly for you in a LASERS account.

You continue employment while your retirement benefit accumulates in your DROP account.

Pension benefits, including DROP funds received or accumulated during marriage, are community property and subject to Louisiana's community property laws.

DROP might not be for everyone. See DROP/IBO comparison on page 24.



DROP ELIGIBILITY



You must be eligible for regular retirement before participating in DROP. Regular members become eligible to participate when they meet one of the following three requirements:

30 years of service at any age;

25 years of service at age 55 or older; or

10 years of service at age 60.

Any member hired on or after July 1, 2006 shall be eligible for retirement if he has:

Ten years of service credit at age 60 or thereafter

Members who choose a 20-Year or 10-Year Reduced Retirement or the Initial Benefit Option (IBO) cannot participate in DROP.



DROP PARTICIPATION PERIOD



What is the DROP Participation Period?

You may participate in DROP one time for no more than thirty-six (36) months.

Members who were eligible to retire on or before December 31, 1995, may enter DROP at any time.

Members not eligible to retire prior to January 1, 1996, must participate in DROP within their "window" of opportunity.

The "window" begins 60 days from the first eligibility date for regular retirement.

If you do not enter DROP within the "window" you lose your rights to enter DROP for the full 36 months. For example, if a year has passed since your window of opportunity you have lost one year of DROP. Therefore, you have two years remaining to participate in DROP.

You may continue to work after DROP, provided you did not end DROP participation early.

Unused sick and annual leave cannot be used to establish eligibility for DROP participation.

SELF-DIRECTED DROP

Do you need more information about the Self-Directed Plan (SDP)?

A DROP participant will have a contributing period, wherein a sub-account is established and the monthly retirement benefit will be deposited to the sub-account.

After the contributing period, which is known as the investment period, the member's balance is moved to a self-directed sub-account.

For tax purposes, the DROP sub-accounts will remain within the trust of LASERS.

LASERS will manage the sub-accounts while members are in the contributing period.

LASERS third-party administrator, Great-West Retirement Services, is the administrator of the sub-accounts after the contributing period.

Members who participate in DROP prior to 01/01/04 will have the opportunity to transfer their DROP funds to the self-directed account. This is an irrevocable decision. If they do not choose to transfer the DROP funds, then the funds will continue to be invested in the same fashion as the LASERS portfolio.

Members who participate in DROP after 01/01/04 will be required to enter the Self-Directed Plan.



DROP/IBO WITHDRAWALS



Funds are not subject to Louisiana individual income tax. However, your funds are subject to federal income tax when the money is withdrawn. You select the method of withdrawing the money from your account:

Monthly

Annually

Lump sum, rollovers,

Payments spread over a 10-year period or members expected lifetime, or You may leave the money on deposit to earn interest, when applicable

Withdrawals must begin the year after you reach the age of 70½ for any financial investments.

Quarterly statements will be provided for each account.

You must name a beneficiary for your DROP account. It does not have to be the same as your retirement beneficiary. You can have more than one beneficiary.



DEATH WHILE IN DROP

What happens if a member dies while in DROP?

If death occurs while in DROP, the member's DROP account balance will be payable to his or her designated DROP beneficiary, or according to the state laws governing inheritance and estate matters.



DROP / IBO COMPARISON



Your age and possibility for increase in salary should be heavily considered when choosing between DROP and the IBO.

DROP may not be the best choice for a member who may receive substantial annual salary increases or plans to continue to work many years after the eligibility date for retirement.

DROP could be the best choice for a member who is receiving only regular annual salary increases and who does not anticipate a dramatic increase in salary.

You should always obtain information on all available options before making a selection between DROP and IBO.

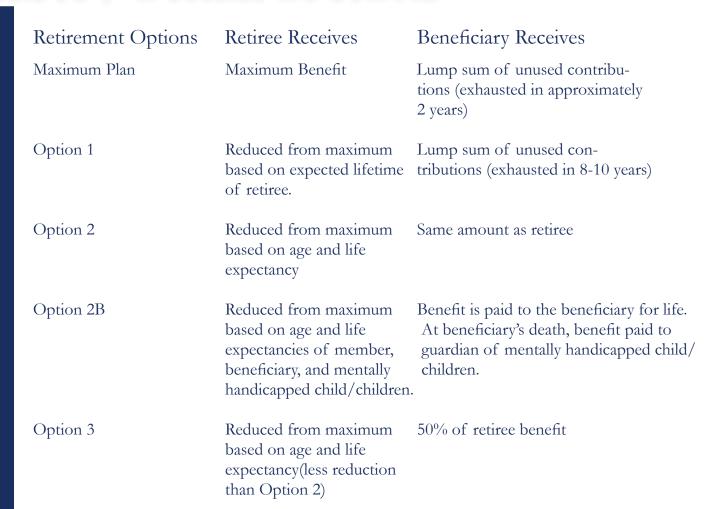
For more information regarding this comparison, please contact LASERS to request a DROP versus IBO Comparison Brochure.



MAXIMUM BENEFIT / OTHER OPTIONS

Option 4-A

Option 4-B



90% of Maximum Plan

Reduced from maximum

based on joint life

expectancy

55% of Maximum Plan

55% of retiree benefit



LEAVE AND RETIREMENT



When you work for the State of Louisiana, you earn sick and annual leave based on the amount of years you have worked.

When you terminate state service, according to civil service rules, your agency may pay you for a portion of your annual and sick leave at your regular hourly rate. Check with your agency for the exact leave amount you will receive.

Unused sick and annual leave cannot be used to establish eligibility for retirement.

If you retire, in addition to the leave payment above, you have 2 choices related to the balance of your annual and sick leave:

1) You can either convert the combined leave time to retirement service credit and increase your monthly benefit at the time of retirement,

or

2) Receive a lump sum, actuarially reduced, payment for the leave.



LEAVE CONVERTED TO SERVICE CREDIT

How is my leave converted to service credit?

LASERS uses the leave conversion table below to convert leave into retirement credit. The unused annual and sick leave is combined and certified by your human resource office at the time of your retirement. The leave may be converted to retirement service credit by days. Calculate your leave conversion by taking your total hours and divide by 8 (working an 8-hour day) to determine days. Then apply to the chart below:

1-26 days =	0.1 year	131-156 days =	0.6 year
27-52 days =	0.2 year	157-182 days =	0.7 year
53-78 days =	0.3 year	183-208 days =	0.8 year
79-104 days =	0.4 year	209-234 days =	0.9 year
105-130 days =	0.5 year	235-260 days =	1.0 year



LUMP SUM PAYMENT UNUSED LEAVE



If you do not choose to convert your leave, you can be paid in a lump sum for the actuarial value (not the hourly salary rate) of the leave.

The amount of lump sum payment is calculated:

Using your age at termination of employment; The amount of unused leave; and Your final average compensation.



MONTHLY BENEFIT AMOUNT

What can affect the amount of my monthly benefit?

1. Community Property Settlements

LASERS reminds you that Louisiana is a community property state. Pension benefits, including DROP funds received or accumulated during marriage, are community property. You should be aware that an ex-spouse might be entitled to a portion of the retirement benefit according to that spouse's community property interest.

LASERS requires that a certified true copy of the Court Order be on file before any community assets are divided. If LASERS does not receive this order, LASERS will not be held responsible for the accountability of community funds. Also, Louisiana does not recognize common-law marriages. If this applies to you, your pension assets are considered separate property not community property. However, in the event of your death, minor children of the union may be entitled to certain benefits.

You should contact an attorney to make sure that your interests are protected. For additional information contact LASERS Legal Division.

2. Spousal Consent

If you are married and you decide to name someone other than your spouse as beneficiary (i.e. children, grandchildren, friend etc.). or if you choose Maximum or Option 1, then your spouse must sign a Spousal Consent Form acknowledging agreement to your decision. Without this consent, your option selection is limited. This form may be obtained through your human resource personnel or through LASERS. This form must be notarized. If you are divorced, spousal approval is not required. You must provide a certified true copy of your divorce decree.



SURVIVOR BENEFITS



Survivor benefits may be available to the survivors of a member who dies while in ACTIVE service. Beneficiary benefits may be available to the beneficiaries of a RETIRED member who dies after RETIREMENT.

Survivor Benefits

If you die while in state service as an active member, LASERS will:

Verify the number of years of service, Determine if there is a minor child eligible to receive a benefit, and Determine if there is a surviving spouse eligible to receive a benefit.

Should there be no minor children or surviving spouse, no monthly benefits are payable. Your employee contributions will be paid to your named beneficiary. The beneficiary will receive the balance in your employee contribution account in a lump sum.

Should you not have the number of years of service required for a survivor benefit, LASERS will pay the named beneficiary. Remember, survivors first, then named beneficiary.

Surviving spouses of Wildlife Agents who remarry prior to age 55 forfeit the benefit.

Survivor Benefit information continued on next page...



SURVIVOR BENEFITS

Survivor Benefits, continued...

1. Surviving minor children

Survivor benefits for minor children will be paid if you were an active contributing member at the time of death and had at least five years of state service. 75% of your final average compensation (FAC) will be split equally between your children until they are no longer considered minors.

A minor child is defined as an unmarried child less than 18 years of age, or an unmarried full-time student less than 23 years of age. The student must be attending at least 80% of classes. LASERS will certify attendance on a semester-by-semester basis.

If surviving minor children are not in the custody of a surviving spouse, the benefits are paid to the minor's legal custodian or trustee. If you do not wish the guardian to receive the funds, you can establish a trust for the child. Then at 18, the child will receive the benefits directly.

Regardless of age, physically disabled or mentally handicapped children receive 75% of member's final average compensation for life, if member has no spouse or minor children. If there is a surviving spouse, one third of the benefit will go to spouse and two thirds will go to eligible minor children. LASERS requires a signed statement from a doctor verifying the disability.

Survivor Benefit information continued on next page...



SURVIVOR BENEFITS

Survivor Benefits, continued...

2. Surviving spouse with minor children

If you have had ten years of service, and there is also a surviving spouse, one-third of the survivor benefit will be paid to the spouse and two-thirds will be paid to the minor child until the child is no longer a minor. The benefits stop when a child is no longer a minor. Then the spouse receives the surviving spouse benefit. A surviving spouse must have been married to a deceased member for one year prior to death to be eligible for benefit.

3. Surviving spouse without minor children

Survivor benefits will be paid if you were an active contributing member at the time of death and had at least ten years of state service. You must have been married at least one year immediately prior to death.

Survivor benefits will be paid if you were not an active contributing member at the time of death, had at least 20 years of state service, and left your contributions at LASERS.

Survivor benefits pays 50% of your average monthly compensation, or \$200 per month, whichever is greater.

WILDLIFE & FISHERIES PLAN - R.S. 11:234 (B) provides that any person who, after June 22, 1993, is receiving survivor benefits or becomes eligible to receive survivor benefits shall not have their benefits discontinued upon remarriage if such remarriage occurs after their attaining age 55.



DISABILITY BENEFITS

Are disability benefits available should I become disabled?

If an active member, you must have a minimum of ten years of service to apply for disability retirement. Your doctor must certify that you are permanently and/or totally disabled from performing your current job duties.

You must have 20 years of service if you have withdrawn from active service and left your contributions at LASERS. A member who files for disability retirement while out of state service must present clear and convincing evidence that the disability was incurred while an active member.

Benefit calculation is the same as regular retirement.

To be eligible for benefits, you must:

- 1. file an application with LASERS;
- 2. have a physician on the State Medical Disability Board certify your disability; and
- 3. prove the disability occurred while an active member of LASERS.

You must make application through your human resource office.

There are two obligations under disability retirement. You may be requested to be re-examined by one of our board-approved physicians, and you will be required to submit a notarized annual earnings statement of any earnings you may have received if you worked in private industry.

If you are able to return to state service, your previous service credit will be restored, and the period of disability will be counted as credited service if you contribute for at least three more years.



STATE EMPLOYMENT AFTER RETIREMENT

Can I go back to work for a state agency after I retire?

If you are retired and wish to return to work under a LASERS member agency, you must select one of three options when you are rehired.

Option 1-50% Rule: Your earnings as a rehired retiree may not exceed 50% of your annual retirement benefit. You do not become a contributing member to LASERS.

Option 2-Repay Benefit: You may repay all benefits received plus interest and rejoin LASERS (does not apply for DROP participants, IBO retirees, or early retirees). You again contribute to LASERS.

Option 3-Suspend Benefit: You may suspend your retirement benefit, rejoin LASERS and become a contributing member again. You must work at least 36 months to receive a supplemental retirement benefit once reemployment terminates. If you work less than 36 months, your contributions will be refunded.



CHECKLIST FOR RETIREMENT



Is there a checklist for retirement?

Register to attend a regular Preretirement Education Program (PREP).

Complete any purchasing, transferring, or reciprocal agreement of any eligible service credit.

Visit the LASERS Website, www.lasersonline.org. Use the benefits estimator and get an unofficial estimate of your regular retirement benefits. Request a retirement benefit estimate one year before your anticipated date of retirement.

Meet with a LASERS representative to receive answers to your specific questions or concerns.

Continue to work toward retirement eligibility.

Begin retirement paperwork with your human resource personnel at least 90 days prior to your retirement eligibility date.

Select your retirement option.

Select your beneficiary.

Choose to either convert your leave to retirement service credit, or receive a lump sum payment.

LASERS requires:

- 1) a true copy of your birth certificate and a copy of your social security card;
- 2) a true copy of your beneficiary's birth certificate and a copy of their social security card; and
- 3) a copy of your marriage license, if choosing Retirement Option 4-A.

REMEMBER - all LASERS members will be required to use direct deposit to receive their monthly retirement benefit.

PLANNING FOR RETIREMENT



Set goals for yourself for 5, 10 or 20 years down the road.

Define your retirement objectives.

Learn about estate planning and how you can benefit.

Do not assume anything is being done for you.

Update beneficiaries/guardians before retiring on important accounts (i.e. LASERS, Office of Group Benefits, LA Deferred Compensation).

Name a guardian for minor children.

List people to contact: person in charge of your estate, attorney, and family members.

Draft a will and consider a living will.

Consider a Power of Attorney for health care and financial matters.

Retirement is more than a specific date on a calendar; it is a process of years of planning beforehand and, hopefully, years of constant fine-tuning afterward. LASERS will be with you all the way during your state career. However, when it is time for you to retire, your choices are greater than ever. Consider it your challenge to securing your future! Contact LASERS at any time for additional information.



CONTACT LASERS



Website: www.lasersonline.org

Telephone Numbers: 1-800-256-3000 225-922-0600

Fax Numbers: 225-922-0595 Benefits 225-922-0864 Membership 225-925-3708 Public Information

Appointments:
Monday through Friday
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